

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0447

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 1865

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FI, UR

SUBJECT: DEBATE ON FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS: FOREIGN MINISTER
SORSA DENIES ANY DISCREPANCY BETWEEN SOVIET AND FINNISH
INTERPRETATIONS OF 1948 TREATY AND FINNISH-SOVIET
RELATIONS

REF: A) HELSINKI 1800, B) HELSINKI 1836

1. SUMMARY: IN A SPEECH BEFORE A FINNISH-SOVIET SOCIETY
AUDIENCE, FOREIGN MINISTER KALEVI SORSA (SOC. DEM.) STATED
THAT THERE ARE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FINLAND AND THE
SOVIET UNION CONCERNING THE 1948 TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP,
COOPERATION AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE (FCMA). HE REJECTED
THE VIEW PUT OFRWARD IN SOME CIRCLES THAT PUBLICATION OF
A BOOK REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT CHANGE IN THE SOVIET VIEW,
REFERRING TO A 1973 JOINT DECLARATION AS AN AUTHORITATIVE
STATEMENT ON SOVIET-FINNISH RELATIONS. SORSA'S
SPEECH WAS THE FIRST REACTION BY THE KEKKONEN ADMINISTRATION
TO THE CURRENT DEBATE. THE POSITION OF THE GOF
IS EVIDENTLY TO DOWNPLAY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK
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AND TO REASSERT PREVIOUS JOINT INTERPRETATIONS. THZC

EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED SEVERAL INTERESTING COMMENTS CONCERNING THE BOOK AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE. FINNISH NEWSPAPERS FRIENDLY TO THE GOVERNMENT COALITION PARTIES HAVE TENDED ALSO TO DOWNPLAY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK, BUT CONSERVATIVE AND INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONCERN. SORSA'S SPEECH IS UNLIKELY TO END THE DEBATE. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER SORSA STATED IN A SPEECH SEPTEMBER 5 THAT FINLAND AND THE SOVIET UNION DO NOT HAVE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION OVER INTERPRETATION OF THE 1948 FCMA TREATY BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE SAID THE GOF IS FULLY CONVINCED THAT MUTUAL AGREEMENT BY FINLAND AND THE SOVIET UNION AS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TREATY HAS REMAINED UNCHANGED.

3. SORSA'S SPEECH WAS MADE AT A CELEBRATION OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TOWN OF NURMES LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE FINNISH-SOVIET SOCIETY. ALSO SPEAKING AT THE ANNIVERSARY MEETING WAS THE SOVIET CHARGE D'AFFAIRES M.N. STRELTSOV, WHO REFERRED TO THE FCMA TREATY AS FORMING THE BASIS OF FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS BUT DEVOTED THE BULK OF HIS SPEECH TO DISARMAMENT. SORSA IN HIS SPEECH ALSO DISCUSSED THE CSCE, ECONOMIC/ COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS.

4. WITH RESPECT TO THE FCMA TREATY, SORSA REFERRED TO CIRCLES WHICH WANTED TO GIVE A PICTURE THAT THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE SOVIET UNION ON FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS MIGHT HAVE CHANGED ESSENTIALLY. HE REJECTED THIS PICTURE, HOWEVER, AND SAID THAT A COMMON INTERPRETATION HAS BEEN AUTHORITATIVELY REGISTERED IN, AMONG OTHER PLACES, THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED IN CONNECTION WITH THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY, CELEBRATED IN 1973. SORSA STATED THAT THE 1948 FCMA TREATY, THE CORNERSTONE OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN FINLAND AND THE SOVIET UNION, HAS COMPLETELY PRESERVED ITS SIGNIFICANCE. HE SAID THAT THE MANY-SIDED COOPERATION RESULTING FROM THE PACT HAS BEEN AN CONFIDENTIAL

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EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF CONFIDENCE AND MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO STATES HAVING DIFFERENT SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEMS.

5. SORSA'S SPEECH WAS THE FIRST REACTION BY THE KEKKONEN ADMINISTRATION TO THE CURRENT OUTPOURING OF PRESS ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS (MORE THAN 20 IN ALL THUS FAR) ON FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS WHICH WAS

SPARKED BY THE APPEARANCE OF THE KOMISSAROV BOOK IN MOSCOW (REF A). SORSA WAS AUTHORITATIVE IN HIS REFERENCES TO THE POSITION OF THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT, AND THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE OCCASION CHOSEN FOR THE SPEECH AND THE PRESENCE OF THE RANKING SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL IN COUNTRY WERE MEANT TO UNDERScore THE OFFICIALNESS OF THE SORSA STATEMENTS. EVIDENTLY, THE POSITION OF THE GOF IS TO DENY PUBLICLY THAT THE KOMISSAROV BOOK HAS ANY SIGNIFICANCE AND TO ASSERT THE VALIDITY OF PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TREATY, SPECIFICALLY THE APRIL 7, 1973 FINNISH-SOVIET DECLARATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY.

6. JAAKKO BLOMBERG, DIVISION CHIEF OF BILATERAL AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, TOLD THE POLCOUNS THAT THE 1973 JOINT STATEMENT IS THE MOST RECENT COMMON STATEMENT ON THE FCMA TREATY AND FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS AND IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT IS A JOINT STATEMENT. HE SAID THAT SUCH STATEMENTS SHOULD BE UPDATED EVERY FOUR OR FIVE YEARS AND INDICATED THAT PRESIDENT KEKKONEN MIGHT SEEK A NEW JOINT STATEMENT ON HIS NEXT TRIP TO THE SOVIET UNION EARLY IN 1977. BLOMBERG SAID THERE HAS BEEN NO COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE GOF AND GUSSR ON THIS MATTER. HE MENTIONED THAT ONE HEARS THAT THE BOOK IS ONLY A BELATED AND UPDATED VERSION OF THE BOOK THAT APPEARED IN FINNISH IN 1974 BY ONE OF THE SAME AUTHORS, AND HE COMMENTED THAT HE "CAN LIVE" WITH THAT EXPLANATION. A BRITISH DIPLOMAT TOLD THE POLCOUNS THAT A SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL TOLD HIM THE PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK AND THE FINNISH MEDIA REACTION HAD CAUGHT HIS EMBASSY UNAWARES. THE SOVIET EMBASSY IS CONFIDENTIAL

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TAKING THE LINE THAT THE PUBLICATION HAS NO SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DOES NOT REPRESENT ANY SOVIET REINTERPRETATION OF FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS.

7. ANOTHER FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT WITHIN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THERE IS SOME CONCERN OVER THE PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK AND CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR EX-FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL MAX JAKOBSON, WHO WAS EPECIFICALLY ATTACKED IN THE BOOK. THIS OFFICIAL ALSO SAID IT WAS CONSIDERED BY SOME IN THE MINISTRY THAT THE BOOK, PUBLISHED IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE, ACTUALLY IS INTENDED NOT FOR A FINNISH AUDIENCE BUT RATHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THAT MIGHT YEARN FOR THE INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY ENJOYED BY FINLAND. THE BOOK, UNDER THIS INTERPRETATION, SERVES AS A

REMINDER THAT FINNISH INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY IS NOT WITHOUT ITS LIMITS.

8. IN GENERAL TERMS, FINNISH NEWSPAPERS FRIENDLY TO THE GOVERNING PARTIES (SUOMENMAA OF THE CENTER PARTY, SOSIALIDEMOKRATTI AND DEMARI OF THE SOC. DEM PARTY, HUFVUDSTADSBLADET, ASSOCIATED WITH THE SWEDISH PEOPLES PARTY, AND KANSAN UUTISET OF THE SKDL AND MAJORITY WING OF THE SKP) HAVE ALL TENDED TO MINIMIZE BOTH THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SOVIET BOOK DIFFERS FROM SOME FINNISH INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TREATY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BOOK ITSELF AND ITS AUTHORS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CONSERVATIVE PRESS (UUSI SUOMI) AND INDEPENDENT PRESS, PARTICULARLY HELSINGIN SANOMAT, HAVE EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN OVER THE BOOK AND WHAT THEY VIEW AS ITS NARROW INTERPRETATION OF FINNISH NEUTRALITY. WHILE THE POSITIONS OF THE PRESS FRIENDLY TO THE GOV GOVERNING COALITION QUITE ACCURATELY PRESAGED SORSA'S DOWNPLAYING OF THE BOOK AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE, SORSA'S SPEECH SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO SATISFY THOSE FINNS WHO VIEW THE PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK WITH CONCERN.

9. THE EMBASSY IS PREPARING AN ADDITIONAL MESSAGE COMPARING LANGUAGE IN THE KOMISSAROV BOOK (AGAIN WITH THE CAVEAT THAT ALL WE HAVE TO WORK WITH ARE QUOTATIONS CONTAINED IN REVIEW ARTICLES) WITH RELEVANT SECTIONS
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OF THE APRIL 7, 1973 JOINT DECLARATION. AT THAT TIME THE EMBASSY WILL COMMENT FURTHER ON THIS INTERESTING EXAMINATION OF SOVIET-FINNISH RELATIONS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN THE FINNISH MEDIA AND AMONG THE PUBLIC AT LARGE.
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